



Fresh Start Act of 2023

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Background

After decades of overcriminalization, between 70 million and 100 million Americans have criminal records that appear in routine background checks, preventing many individuals from obtaining jobs, housing, and educational opportunities. Millions of these individuals are eligible to have their record sealed or expunged after a predetermined waiting period, but the complex process for filing for a record-clearing petition, including the high legal costs, makes it almost impossible for these Americans to receive a second chance at life. While the record-clearing process can be cumbersome, many states have begun to implement laws that will quickly and significantly simplify it. As the country faces a severe workforce shortage problem, it's time that we pass meaningful legislation and provide critical funding to remove the barriers for justice-involved individuals.

About the Fresh Start Act

The Fresh Start Act of 2023 allows states that have record-sealing or expungement laws in place to apply for a federal grant to help improve their automated record infrastructure. Specifically, the Fresh Start Act would:

- Authorize the National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) to provide grants to states to to automate their criminal records programs;
- Makes clear that courts and law enforcement must retain access to cleared records;
- Prohibit states that delay record expungement or sealing due to fines or fees from receiving grant funding; and
- Require states to report the number of records that have been sealed or expunged, broken down according to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Endorsed by: Black & Jewish Unity Coalition, Brennan Center, Center for American Progress, Clean Slate Initiative, Crosspoint Inc., DreamJustice, Due Process Institute, International Community Justice Association, JPMorgan Chase Policy Center, Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections, Oriana House, Pure 1, R St. Institute, Right on Crime, Third Way